

36 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

are tired, he has to make his meaning so clear that they have no trouble in understanding it. ' Il faut qu'ils comprennent trop pour comprendre assez/ ¹

One result of this attempt to make every point intelligible to the meanest or laziest understanding is that the speaker becomes prolix and verbose. Brougham, himself a sinner in that respect, complains of Macaulay's prolixity. He was annoyed because the editor of the Edinburgh Review allowed the new contributor more space than he was allotted himself. Macaulay's Sir William Temple, wrote Brougham to the editor, ' is an excellent paper, only he *does* take a terrible space to turn in. Good God! what an awful man he would have been in Nisi Prius! . . . , He takes as long to delineate three characters of little importance as I have to sketch ten, the greatest in the whole world. I really wish you could give him a hint/ ²

Another common sin with orators is repetition. A historian usually assumes in his readers a certain amount of interest in his subject; when he has explained a question once, or stated an argument once, he does not think it necessary to repeat the explanation or demonstration.

Either the reader will remember it, or he can turn back to page 150 and refresh his memory. But the orator repeats his arguments, because he aims at carrying

conviction to
every one of his hearers ; some may have
imperfectly
apprehended that particular argument, some
may have
forgotten it, but all must be made to
understand it. A
contemporary member of Parliament thus
describes the
practice of Charles James Fox.

¹ Ibid. p. 173.

² Selection from the Correspondence of Macvey Napier, ed.
Macvey Napier
(1879), p. 276.